

Miramar: Duxbury's Diamond

By LAUREN GRILLI

To those who drive by the property on their way into Kingston, Miramar is probably best known as that place with the sledding hill and the constant presence of Canada geese. To those who live there, like Father Thomas Griffith, "we're a full-service, eclectic, spiritual retreat center," he said. "Miramar is a hidden diamond in Duxbury."

Offering a variety of spiritual retreats since the mid-1940s, Miramar, which means "view of the sea," is now offering something else – a cocktail party fundraiser.

"Some Enchanted Evening," which is the second of what Fr. Griffith hopes to be an annual event, takes place this Saturday at 6 p.m. "Last year, the weather cooperated and people were able to wander around the gardens, which are maintained by Father Edward Dudink," said Fr. Griffith, a native Chicagoan. "Hopefully it will cooperate this year, but I don't trust this New England weather."

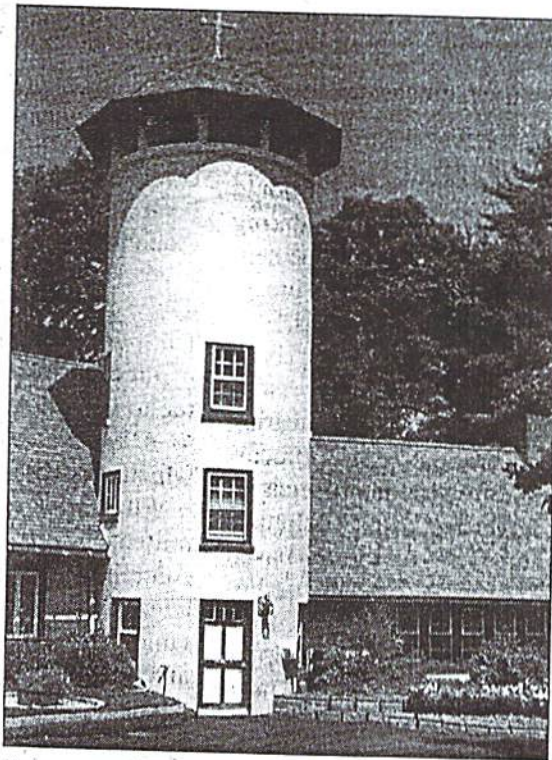
Last year's event raised \$25,000. "It's our capital campaign," said Fr. Griffith. "It's to help us purchase the things we desperately need, like an elevator. Some of the older sisters can't climb the stairs." Sure enough, attached to the left banister of the central staircase is a wooden stairlift which, said Kathleen Powers, "probably dates back to when the building was bought in the 1940s."

"This is an older building, needs constant upkeep and updating," Fr. Griffith said. "We need to make it more handicap accessible."

Powers, who attended last year's fundraiser, has been helping organize the event.

"The chapel will turn into a ballroom, which is what it was originally designed as," she said. There will be a band from Duxbury, Vision, providing live music for the evening.

There will also be a silent auction to help with the fundraising. Partygoers can bid on gift certificates, donated by local businesses, paintings by local artists, and jewelry. Also being



Known as "the lighthouse" to members of the Miramar community, this building was designed in the late 1800s and is made out of solid concrete.

auctioned are handmade clocks constructed by the late Father Larry Poetz, who was a member of the Miramar community.

The main building of Miramar was constructed in 1876 by Atherton Loring, who, according to legend, arrived from England with only \$46 in his pocket. It was later owned by the Belknap family, who added rare wood panels to the interior of the building. In 1922, the building was bought by the Society of the Divine Word and remained a seminary for 45 years.

Father Joseph Connolly remembers the Christmas of 1947 at Miramar because of who sang at the Christmas service – the Von Trapps. "I was just a little boy running around in knickers," he said.

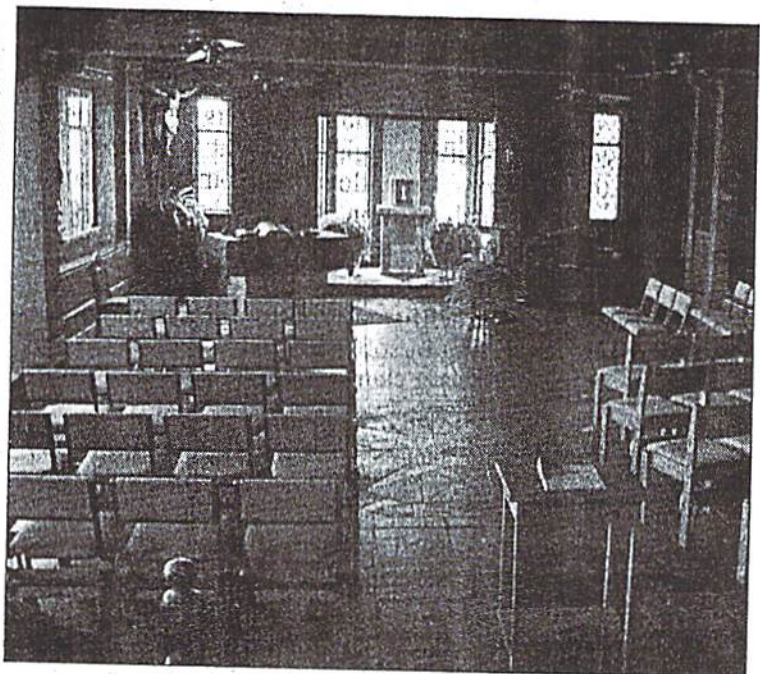
The Von Trapps used Miramar as a home base for most of the year, touring other places in the United States and returning to the complex for rest and privacy.

Another part of the complex, which was designed in the late 1800s by a student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is made entirely out of concrete. Interested in the heating and cooling properties of concrete, he made the walls and floor twelve inches thick. Known as "the lighthouse" for its spire-like shape, the building is "wonderful in the summer, but it's a bear to heat in the winter," said Fr. Griffith. "But you don't see too many buildings made entirely out of concrete."

"Some Enchanted Evening," takes place this Saturday, August 8, at 6 p.m. A Victorian theme will prevail throughout the evening. Tickets cost \$100 apiece and include dinner, drinks, and dancing.



Part of the grounds at Miramar, which are maintained by Father Edward Dudink, include this gazebo.



On Saturday evening, this chapel will transform into a ballroom, which is what it was originally designed as.